
CITY COUNCIL MEETING

MONDAY, APRIL 27, 2009

A regular meeting of City Council was held on the above date for the transaction of general business.

Vaughn D. Spencer, President of Council, called the meeting to order.

The invocation was given by Msgr. Thomas Orsulak, St. Peter's R.C. Church

All present pledged to the flag.

ATTENDANCE

Council President Vaughn Spencer
Councilor Steve Fuhs, District 1
Councilor Goodman-Hinnershitz, District 2
Councilor Sterner, District 3
Councilor Marmarou, District 4
Councilor Maria Baez, District 5
Councilor Jeffrey Waltman, District 6
City Auditor D. Cituk
City Solicitor C. Younger
City Clerk L. Kelleher
Public Works Director C. Jones
Sgt. at Arms Captain R. Schafer
Managing Director R. Hottenstein

PROCLAMATIONS AND PRESENTATIONS

Mayoral Proclamations

- Recognizing Bike Week, accepted by Emily Weidner

Council Commendations

- Recognizing AFSCME Week, accepted by Ron Lyons, President
- Recognizing the individual achievements of Holy Name athletes
- Recognizing the 150th anniversary of St. Peters R.C. Church, accepted by Msgr. Thomas Orsulak.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Council President Spencer announced that one (1) citizen is registered to address Council on non-agenda issues. He inquired if Council objected to suspending the rule requiring comment on non-agenda matters at the end of the meeting. No one objected, therefore, the rule requiring non-agenda comment at the end of the meeting was suspended. Council President Spencer reminded the citizen registered to speak about the remaining public speaking rules.

Carl Ramich, of McKently St., requested that Council pass a resolution urging to citizens buy American products. He described the effort across the nation to forward the Buy American legislation.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA & MINUTES

Council President Spencer called Council's attention to the agenda for this meeting, including the items listed under the consent agenda heading and the minutes from April 13th, regular meeting.

Council President Spencer noted the need to add two (2) resolutions as follows:

- Resolution declaring May 12th as Police Memorial Day
- Resolution to appoint the Zoning Administrator

Councilor Baez moved, seconded by Councilor Waltman, to approve the agenda, as amended, including the items listed under the Consent Agenda heading and the minutes for the April 13th regular meeting with Council. The motion was approved unanimously.

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT

Mr. Hottenstein reviewed the report distributed to Council covering the following:

- Requirements for dumpster placement
- DEP illegal dumping grant
- Re-cap of the EMS collection

Councilor Waltman asked the administration to work with Hillside Swimming Association to keep the pool operational. He noted his opposition to the loss of another community recreation resource.

Councilor Sterner noted that Hillside Swimming Association contacted the City to see if the City would be interested in purchasing the swimming pool, however, the City declined. He stated that the Hillside Swimming Association now believes in the need for the sale of the facility to repay the shareholders cost.

AUDITOR'S REPORT

City Auditor Dave Cituk reviewed the report distributed to Council at the meeting covering the following topics:

- 2009 admissions tax collection
- 2008 property ownership changes
- 2007-2008 fire escrow audit

Councilor Sterner asked the auditor how many rental properties were transferred during 2008. Mr. Cituk stated that he was unsure about the number of rental properties transferred that were rentals.

Councilor Marmarou noted that a minimum of 142 rental properties currently exist in District 4.

Councilor Goodman-Hinnershitz requested a more in-depth report showing the transience of Reading residents and comparing that data with other cities.

REPORTS FROM DIRECTORS, BOARDS, AUTHORITIES AND COMMISSIONS

Dennis Louwerse, Executive Director of BARTA, noted that rider-ship has grown by 8.9%. He stated that BARTA serves 3.1 million riders per year. He added that on average BARTA serves 26 riders per hour and 44 riders per hour on high use routes.

Mr. Louwerse described BARTA's Bike and Ride program and encouraged councilors and citizens to visit the BARTA website, to learn more about different BARTA programs. He noted that the application of a public transportation green operation plan to purchase hybrid buses, which will cost 22.60% on average in pure savings. The savings will reduce BARTA's gasoline consumption by 550-600 gallons of diesel per year.

Mr. Louwerse described his work on the R6 project, formally known as the Schuylkill Metro, which will extend rail service from Norristown to Reading. He stated that the group is currently considering a toll road on 422 to pay for R6 and

provide other road and bridge improvements. He noted the positive economic impact R6 would bring to Berks County.

Mr. Louwerse described BARTA's activities to rehabilitate the Franklin Street Station. He stated that the roof has been replaced but noted the severe damage to the ornate ceiling. He also described the regional connector study to join multi-municipal public transportation systems.

Mr. Louwerse noted that BARTA will be getting 4 million dollars in stimulus funds, which will be used to improve the BARTA building at 11th and Exeter, purchase security cameras, etc. He also described the BARTA Boards work to complete a strategic plan.

Councilor Fuhs thanked Mr. Louwerse for his report and complimented BARTA's operation under his direction. He inquired how funding of the R6 will impact the completion of the Route 222 North Road project. Mr. Louwerse replied that the R6 will be self-funded through the toll road; however the Route 222 North project is not funded by the federal or state governments. He expressed the belief that this lack of funding the Route 222 North project has occurred due to the apparent decrease in gas tax funds.

Council Goodman-Hinershitz inquired if BARTA's increased rider-ship has reduced the use of personal vehicles or encouraged area workers to commute with colleagues.

Councilor Sterner thanked Ms. Louwerse, noting it was a pleasure to hear BARTA's continued work to serve the Reading-Berks area.

ORDINANCES FOR FINAL PASSAGE

Bill No. 22-2009 - amending Chapter 11 Housing of the City of Reading Codified Ordinances by amending the term "Housing Permit" to "Rental Registration" **(Law)** *Introduced at the March 23 regular meeting; reviewed April 6 at the Public Safety Committee; Tabled at the April 13 regular meeting*

Councilor Marmarou moved, seconded by Councilor Goodman-Hinnershitz to enact Bill No 22-2009.

Bill No. 22-2009 was enacted by the following vote:

Yea: Baez, Fuhs, Goodman-Hinnershitz, Marmarou, Sterner – 5.
Nay: Waltman, Spencer, President - 2.

Bill No. 23-2009 - authorizing the Mayor to execute a deed, temporary easement from the City of Reading to the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Department of Transportation, and other documents (agreement of sale & settlement statement), thereby conveying premises situate at Route 183, Bern Township, Berks County, Pennsylvania **(Law)** *Introduced at the April 13 regular meeting*

Councilor Fuhs moved, seconded by Councilor Baez, to enact Bill No. 23-2009.

Council President Spencer explained that there is a small parcel of land on Route 183 that BARTA needs to make road and ramp improvements.

Bill No. 23-2009 was enacted by the following vote:

Yea: Baez, Fuhs, Goodman-Hinnershitz, Marmarou, Sterner, Waltman, Spencer, President – 7.
Nay: None - 0.

Bill No 24-2009 - amending 1-271 of the City of Reading Personnel Code (Salary Administration) by amending the salary range for the Finance Director **(Man Dir)** *Introduced at the April 13 regular meeting*

Councilor Baez moved, seconded by Councilor Fuhs, to enact Bill No. 24-2009.

Mr. Hottenstein explained the need to adjust the salary range to meet the compensation rate for Carl Geffken, who will be appointed to the Finance Director position this evening.

Bill No. 24-2009 was enacted by the following vote:

Yea: Baez, Fuhs, Goodman-Hinnershitz, Marmarou, Sterner, Spencer, President – 6
Nay: Waltman – 1

Bill No. 25-2009 - setting forth the salary of the Finance Director at ninety-eight thousand dollars (\$98,000.00) per annum **(Man Dir)** *Introduced at the April 13 regular meeting*

Councilor Baez moved, seconded by Councilor Fuhs, to enact Bill No. 25-2009.

Bill No. 25-2009 was enacted by the following vote:

Yea: Baez, Fuhs, Goodman-Hinnershitz, Marmarou, Sterner, Spencer,
President – 6
Nay: Waltman – 1

Bill No. 26-2009 – authorizing the amendment of the 2009 budget – revenues and expenditures – as attached (**Finance**) *Introduced at the April 13 regular meeting*

Councilor Baez moved, seconded by Councilor Fuhs, to enact Bill 26-2009.

Mr. Hottenstein stated that the administration has clarified the auditor's concerns addressed at the April 13th meeting. He noted that the incorrect numbers were originally uploaded into USL due to the administrations confusion about the amendments adopted by Council in December 2008. He stated that the USL figures will be corrected after the enactment of this ordinance.

Councilor Waltman noted the need to define the process used to upload the approved budget into the USL. He asked that this issue be covered in the Finance Committee meeting.

Councilor Goodman-Hinnershitz agreed with the need to tighten the process.

Bill No. 26-2009 was enacted by the following vote:

Yea: Baez, Fuhs, Goodman-Hinnershitz, Marmarou, Sterner, Waltman,
Spencer, President – 7.
Nay: None - 0.

INTRODUCTION OF NEW ORDINANCES

Ordinance - amending the City of Reading Zoning Ordinance per Exhibit "A" to create a new zoning district to be known as Municipal Use (MU) Zoning District and the uses allowed therein as well as the requirements for such uses and amending the City of Reading Zoning Map to reflect the addition of a new zoning district as described in and per the map attached as Exhibit "B" (**Law**)

RESOLUTIONS

Resolution 46-2009 – declaring May 12 as Police Memorial Day.

Councilor Marmarou moved, seconded by Councilor Goodman-Hinnershitz to adopt Resolution 46-2009.

Council President Spencer stated that National Police Memorial Week is held during the 3rd week in May. Chief of Police William Heim has asked Council to declare May 12th as the day that Reading citizens can celebrate the service of the Reading Police Officers.

Resolution No. 46-2009 was adopted by the following vote:

Yea: Baez, Fuhs, Goodman-Hinnershitz, Marmarou, Sterner, Waltman, Spencer, President - 7.

Nay: None - 0.

Resolution 47-2009— appoint Jennifer Oehler as the Zoning Administrator.

Councilor Fuhs moved, seconded by Councilor Goodman-Hinnershitz, to adopt Resolution 47-2009.

Resolution No. 47-2009 was adopted by the following vote:

Yea: Baez, Fuhs, Goodman-Hinnershitz, Sterner - 4.

Nay: Marmarou, Waltman, Spencer, President - 3.

Resolution 48-2009 – confirming the appointment of Carl Geffken as Finance Director for the City of Reading **(Man Dir)**

Councilor Marmarou moved, seconded by Councilor Fuhs, to adopt Resolution 48-2009.

Councilor Goodman-Hinnershitz stated she was impressed with the expertise of Mr. Geffken. She stated that the City needs someone of this caliber to assist with the financial challenges that the City is facing.

Councilor Waltman agreed but noted his concern with the increase in the salary level, as it is 20% higher than the past range. He noted the need to balance salaries with expertise and stated that he will not support the appointment of the Finance Director.

Resolution No. 48-2009 was adopted by the following vote:

Yea: Baez, Fuhs, Goodman-Hinnershitz, Marmarou, Sterner, Spencer, President – 6.

Nay: Waltman - 1.

Resolution 49-2009 – appointing Andre Grant to the Blighted Property Review Committee (Admin Oversight)

Resolution 50-2009– reappointing William Keller to the Electrician’s Examining Board (Admin Oversight)

Resolution 51-2009– reappointing Brian D’Amico to the Convention Center Authority (Admin Oversight)

Resolution 52-2009– reappointing Steven Harrity to the Stadium Commission (Admin Oversight)

Resolution 53-2009– reappointing Robert Heebner to the Stadium Commission (Admin Oversight)

Resolution 54-2009– reappointing Cynthia La Sota to the Historical Architectural Review Board (Admin Oversight)

The Administrative Oversight Committee moved to adopt Resolutions 49 - 54, making appointments and reappointments to the Boards, Authorities, and Commissions.

The motion to approve Resolutions 49 - 54 was adopted by the following vote:

Yea: Baez, Fuhs, Goodman-Hinnershitz, Marmarou, Sterner, Waltman, Spencer, President - 7.

Nay: None - 0.

Councilor Goodman-Hinnershitz stated that the Resolutions to appoint members to the Pagoda Foundation is withdrawn this evening and will be readdressed when the legal documents creating the foundation come forward for Council's approval. She noted the intent of the Mayor to appoint these individuals to the Pagoda Foundation Task Force.

COUNCIL COMMENT

Councilor Marmarou noted the continued problem with rental properties in District 4. He stated that citizens are afraid to come to Council meetings to address their quality of life complaints, as they fear retribution. He noted that the majority of the landlords owning properties in District 4 do not live in the City. He again noted that severe increase in the number of rental properties in District 4 is causing severe quality of life problems for those who live in single family properties.

Councilor Marmarou congratulated the Holy Name athletes.

Councilor Fuhs expressed his belief that those who receive DCRs should be publicized in some manner. He expressed the belief that landlords care more about the financial benefits of rental properties than the quality of life problems they cause in Reading neighborhoods.

Councilor Waltman noted that approximately two-thirds (2/3) of the City's properties were sold over a five (5) year period. He noted the need to get a bottom up handle on the rental issue.

Councilor Waltman noted his ten year service on the RATS Committee and their work on the R6 project. He agreed with the use of a toll system to fund the R6 project.

Councilor Baez thanked AFSCME employees for their service to the Reading community.

Councilor Baez also congratulated John Beckett, her nephew, along with the other Holy Name athletes.

Councilor Baez announced her neighborhood meeting scheduled for May 6 at Wesley Methodist Church at North Front and Windsor Streets.

Councilor Goodman-Hinnershitz agreed with push to Buy American and she urged the City administration to use local workers for jobs and projects in the City. She thanked the Public Works Department for attending to the issues at Neversink Playground.

Councilor Baez also noted the great service provided by the AFSCME bargaining unit.

Councilor Sterner congratulated those receiving commendations this evening. He expressed his belief in the skill and expertise of Mr. Geffken, appointed this evening as the City Finance Director.

Council President Spencer stated that this is the first time the City has hired a Finance Director who has had prior experience in Finance Director positions. He expressed his hope that this Director will take charge and make the necessary changes in the Finance department. He noted the benefit of having fresh eyes to review the operation of the Finance Department.

Council President Spencer expressed his belief that the Zoning Administrator appointed tonight does not have the proper experience. He stated his belief that this candidate only has experience serving on a Zoning Hearing Board and noted the vast difference between sitting on a board and functioning as a Zoning Administrator.

Council President Spencer agreed with the belief that the housing permit process needs quick correction.

Council President Spencer reviewed the meeting schedule listed on the agenda.

Councilor Baez moved, seconded by Councilor Marmarou, to adjourn the regular meeting of Council.

Linda Kelleher CMC, City Clerk